

Global Business Languages

Volume 8 *Discovering New Economies*

Article 12

May 2010

Review: A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese. Masato Kikuchi.

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Recommended Citation

Tabuse, Motoko (2010) "Review: A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese. Masato Kikuchi.," *Global Business Languages*: Vol. 8 , Article 12.
Available at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol8/iss1/12>

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REVIEWS

Masato Kikuchi. *A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese*. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2002. xx + 307 pp.

The intended purpose of *A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese* “is to help readers build a good grammatical foundation, acquire business terminology, refine discourse styles and increase sensitivity to corporate culture in Japan.” This book is for students who are “intermediate level learners of Japanese.” An intermediate learner is defined here as “someone who has completed a one-year, university-level, general purpose Japanese program or its equivalent. This book is arranged as a story of an American college graduate hired by a Japanese corporation in Japan.

The textbook is comprised of eleven chapters. Examples of them are Chapter 1: Job Interview, Chapter 2: Business Introduction, and Chapter 3: Telephone. Each chapter consists of five sections: (1) Priming—background information to facilitate the understanding of the conversation that follows; (2) Chapter Conversation (Conversation 1A, 1B, etc.)—Dialog and Kanji character introduction; (3) Vocabulary; (4) Structures—Grammar Explanations; and (5) Exercise—Grammar, Reading and Writing, Communicative Exercise including Role Playing.

Seven appendices are listed at the end of the textbook. They are (1) Kanji index, (2) Japanese-English Glossary, (3) English-Japanese Glossary, (4) Grammar Index (English Headers/Alphabetical Order), (5) Grammar Index (English Headers/Appearance Order), (6) Grammar Index (Japanese Headers/AIUEO Order) and (7) Grammar Index (Japanese Headers Appearance Order). The Kanji index includes the markings of the reading of kanji that is assumed to be known prior to using the textbook as well as the markings of the reading of kanji that are introduced in the book.

Additional materials are posted on the web site. From this one can download Conversation 1A, which is missing from the book, using one of the three versions: (a) image version, (b) HTML version and (c) PDF version. The instructor’s Guide to Teaching Business Japanese at Georgia Tech (in Japanese), Sample Syllabus, and Sample ACT Weekly Schedule (partly in Japanese) sections describe the program and the delivery method in detail. The Audio for Listening Comprehension Exercises section requires Quick Time. The quality of the recordings is mostly clear and easy to understand.

One of the main focuses of *A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese* is building a firm grammar foundation. The book includes ample explanations of intermediate level grammatical features introduced in the chapters. The *Basic vocabulary, expressions, and grammar* in the Introduction section also provide concise reviews of beginning level Japanese. The book has examples of various business cards, a biographical summary form, a personal disclosure form, a bank deposit slip, and business letters. Those who are thinking about living and working in Japan will appreciate these examples. Priming sections for each chapter also present nice business background information. In Chapter 8, there is a section called Women in Corporate Japan, which describes women's status in Japanese companies between 1986 and the present. The additional materials on the web site also present useful information for teachers who want to learn about the specifics of the business Japanese program at Georgia Tech University and is found out at: <<http://www.iac.gatech.edu/modlangs/Programs/Japanese/program-japanese.htm>>.

The users of this textbook may face frustrating moments. In the very first part of a lesson, Conversation 1A (Mr. Harris goes to a job interview (1)) and Vocabulary 1A are missing. The user must go to the web site above to download those parts of the textbook. The web site URL addresses are not current but users will be led to the correct site automatically. The quality of printing is poor, particularly at the beginning part of the textbook. There are missing lines and letters, overlapping letters, indentation problems and fuzzy letters that make it hard for readers to identify complicated Kanji characters.

In addition, inconsistencies in how learning material is presented are found throughout the book. Some inconsistencies are minor yet annoying, and others are more substantial. Certain vocabulary items are bulleted but there are no explanations for them. Furigana (Hiragana over Kanji; a pronunciation key for Kanji) of several Kanji characters appears in some places but does not in other places. Several Kanji characters that are introduced in a new chapter only appear in the introduction section but nowhere else, making the reader wonder why the Kanji was introduced then and there.

The most frustrating thing, however, may be the fact that the textbook does not provide any answer keys to grammar exercises, leaving independent learners on their own to check their answers. This tendency is observed in a grammar explanation section. In Chapter 4: Structure 4D, the author explains the difference between grammatical features of "no" and "koto," and in the explanation section there are practice items where readers are asked to choose the correct one. No answer key is provided here, either.

Although the readers will experience frustrations with poor printing quality and confusing presentation of learning material, they will never-

theless appreciate the up-to-date information about Japanese business corporations as well as thorough grammar exercises on selected features. *A Systematic Approach to Business Japanese* may be a useful book for intermediate learners who want to review grammatical features and gain some knowledge about the Japanese corporate world.

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